

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A method for the cooling of cleaned and disinfected items contained in a chamber (1) of an automatic cleaning and disinfecting machine that has an outflow (2), the cleaned items being disinfected by heat, and a washing or cleaning program with a variable sequence of program steps being executed inside the automatic cleaning and disinfecting machine, said method comprising the following method steps:

- a) the final cleaning of the items contained in the chamber (1) is carried out using water with addition of auxiliary agents,
- b) the cleaned items contained in the chamber (1) are disinfected by heat,
- c) after the heat disinfection of the cleaned items, air (29) is forcibly introduced into the closed chamber (1), and
- d) with the door (5) of the chamber (1) closed, exhaust air is conveyed out of the closed chamber (1) into the outflow (2) via an exhaust air duct having an exhaust air valve, wherein the outflow contains a siphon bend, and the exhaust duct opens into the outflow at a location downstream of the siphon bend.

2. (canceled)

3. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that, in the event of a prolonged duration of the removal of moist exhaust air out of the chamber (1) with the door (5) chamber closed, an additional drying of the cleaned items contained in the chamber (1) takes place.

4. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the air introduced into the chamber (1) after the disinfection step is ambient air.

5. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that automatic shut-off elements (7,9) are provided in the exhaust air duct (6) and in the intake air duct (8), respectively, for controlling the flow of intake air and exhaust air.

6. (currently amended) The method as claimed in any one or more of patent claims 1 through 5, 1, 3, 4 and 5, characterized in that the air admitted through the air intake duct (8) of the chamber (1) is guided through a microfilter in order to improve the sterility.

7. (currently amended) A device for carrying out the method as claimed in ~~one or more of claims 1 through~~ claim 6, characterized in that a chamber (1) can be acted upon both by cold water or hot water and also by steam from a water/steam unit (16), the cold water/hot water being introduced via spray nozzles (4.1, 4.2, 4.3), the chamber (1) being connected to an outflow (2) via an exhaust air duct (6), and the chamber (1) having an outlet mouth (12) of an openable or closable intake air duct (8) via which the chamber (1) in the closed state can be acted upon by air.

8. (currently amended) The device as claimed in claim 7, characterized in that the outlet mouth of the supply line (14) via which the chamber (1) can be acted upon by steam simultaneously via nozzles (4.1, 4.2, 4.3) is formed either on a roof surface of the chamber (1) or on a back wall or in the lower area or the side walls of the chamber (1).

9. (currently amended) The device as claimed in claim 7, characterized in that automatic shut-off elements which are either spring-controlled or weight-controlled or membrane-controlled or controlled by differential pressure or designed as nonreturn valves (7, 9) are received in the lines (6, 7) for intake air or exhaust air connected to the chamber (1).

10. (currently amended) The device as claimed in claim 7, characterized in that the shut-off elements are designed as forcibly controlled shut-off elements.